

Desolate 1311

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 28: Daolord Darknorth's Era

"I-I..." Emperor Melobo really did begin to cry. Begging was useless. What was he to do?

Ji Ning continued, "The reason why I'm going to kill you... is because of Daolord Allgod."

"Daolord Allgod?" Emperor Melobo's already-pale face turned completely ashen. Of course he remembered that madman! Daolord Allgod had been willing to pay any price in his efforts to kill Melobo, and he had nearly succeeded. Emperor Melobo had only been able to escape by the skin of his teeth.

"He died! He died long ago! There's no way you could've ever met him." Emperor Melobo was panicking.

"True. I never met him. When I was an Elder God, however, I received a bit of kindness from him. His formation-spirit bestowed me with a secret art," Ning said, "And then expressed the hope that if I ever grew strong enough, I would help Daolord Allgod exact revenge upon you and kill you. Although this was nothing more than the dying will of a man who had already lost himself to despair... since I have benefited from him, I'm naturally going to help him carry out his wishes."

"The reason I'm telling you this is so that you'll understand that you... are now dying because of Daolord Allgod," Ning said.

"I-I..." Emperor Melobo now understood everything, and his mind was in a state of chaos. Daolord Allgod had once been an extraordinarily talented figure, and he and his Dao-companion had been like a pair of truly divine lovers. Alas, Emperor Melobo's devouring of his Dao-companion had driven him completely mad. Daolord Allgod had been filled with resentment and hatred until the day he died, and even when he died his eyes remained open and filled with rage.

Neither Emperor Melobo nor Allgod ever would've imagined that the Allgod Estate he casually set up before dying would result in an Elder God, Ji Ning, owing him a debt... and then coming to repay it. Today, Emperor Melobo would die!

Slash. Ning waved his hand, causing a streak of sword-light to appear in the air. The sword-light was ephemeral and indistinct, hard to see with the naked eye. It instantly slashed across Emperor Melobo's body, and as it did so it spread out alongside the Aeonian's karma lines. Everything which had any of his soul or truesoul within it was completely severed!

Emperor Melobo's gaze grew dim. His soul was shattered, and he perished on the spot. Now that Ning had reached such incredible heights in the Dao of Karma, he had learned some new and truly terrifying ways of killing people.

"Fine sword-arts," Hegemon Brightshore said in praise.

"A pity." Ning glanced at Emperor Melobo's corpse, then murmured softly, "Daolord Allgod was a true genius, but he spent most of his life a madman because of this Aeonian. Not even death was an escape for him."

"If Daolord Allgod knew what you did for him, he would feel relieved," Hegemon Brightshore said.

"But he has died and his Dao has vanished. There's no way for him to know." Ning sighed, then turned to leave.

Daolord Yu continued to stare at Ning, her eyes shining. Ning gently waved a finger at her, causing a stream of Immortal energy to fly into her body. It easily undid the seals that were inside of her. Given Ning's current level of mastery of the Dao of Formations, unlocking seals like these was incredibly simple.

"Let's go," Ning said. Hegemon Brightshore and Hegemon Azurefiend both glanced at Daolord Yu, and then they followed Ning in stepping into the void and vanishing.

Daolord Yu stared as Ning vanished before her very eyes. "Daolord Darknorth... Daolord Darknorth..." she murmured repeatedly. He had appeared in her hour of need, when she had been gripped by complete despair. Then, with unbelievable power, he had killed Emperor Melobo as easily as squishing an ant. All of this had intoxicated her. Even Hegemon Brightshore and Hegemon Azurefiend, two mighty Hegemons, had clearly accepted Ning as their leader in this affair.

His power, his voice, his sword-light... all of these things stirred her heart. However, she also knew that this was nothing more than a bit of infatuation. "It feels like a dream." Daolord Yu smiled. A dream was enough for her.

She suddenly turned and saw the various treasures which Emperor Melobo had left behind. A long-lived Emperor like Melobo had many treasures, but Daolord Darknorth and the others had left without touching them. Clearly, they had left the treasures for her.

"For me?" Daolord Yu rose to her feet. "Daolord Darknorth left them behind for me?" She felt a surge of joy in her heart.

In truth, Ning had already swept through the Jedefire Realm's prisons and possessed an incredible amount of treasures. Emperor Melobo wasn't even at the Archon level; how could Ning feel any interest towards his treasures? Ning didn't even want to bother going through them, and the same was doubly true for Azurefiend and Brightshore.

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Within the Aeonian Kingdom. An avatar was lying within an ancient palace. This was Emperor Melobo's avatar. Moments ago, he had been begging for help. Now, his aura had vanished.

Emperor Anchen, Emperor Islehide, and Emperor Duug all stared at his avatar's corpse. "It was Daolord Darknorth who did the deed," Emperor Islehide said softly.

"What can we do?" Emperor Duug said helplessly.

"Nothing but just stare." Emperor Anchen laughed bitterly. "We should feel thankful that Daolord Darknorth has chosen not to cause trouble for us Aeonians. There's no way we would ever dare to go find him! All we can do is hide here in the Aeonian Kingdom and keep ourselves alive."

All three of them felt quite resigned. Emperor Melobo had begged them for help, but who were they supposed to beg? It was Daolord Darknorth who had killed Melobo! Who in the entire Sixteen

Realmverses Alliance would dare stand in his path? Realmslord Windgrace, perhaps... but if he knew of this matter, he'd probably come help Darknorth out!

All of the Hegemons and Emperors were quite intelligent. By now, they could all guess that Realmslord Windgrace and the Lonely King, two truly terrifying figures, were both waiting for the day Daolord Darknorth failed his Daomerge! Neither of them wished to make an enemy out of Darknorth at a time like this. If they pressed him too hard, it would be of no benefit to them but could possibly bring disaster upon themselves. Nobody could stop a rampaging Flamewing, after all!

"I told them all long ago, given that we aren't on good terms with Daolord Darknorth, we Aeonians need to stay low-key during this era, the era of Daolord Darknorth. Don't cause trouble!" Emperor Anchen muttered, "Melobo actually dared to secretly infiltrate the Dao Alliance. He has no one to blame for his death but himself. Send word once more to all the elders that they need to be good boys! Daolord Darknorth isn't as reasonable as the other major powers, and there's no one who can stop him if he attacks."

"Agreed." All of them understood that so long as Daolord Darknorth was alive, this era would belong to him. He was the most dazzling figure in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, and even Realmslord Windgrace would stand on his side.

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"Darknorth, if my visions serves, that female Daolord seems to be a bit smitten with you." After leaving the Orchidfall Everworld, Hegemon Brightshore began to tease Ning a bit.

"Haha..." Ning laughed. "Nothing more than a bit of infatuation. It doesn't count for much." By now, the only person in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance who was on par with Ning in the Dao of Karma was Emperor Waveshift himself. Ning had naturally been able to discern Daolord Yu's interest in him through his mastery of karma. But it was nothing more than a bit of interest; it wouldn't have any true impact on her at all.

"Hegemon Brightshore, next I plan to scour the entire Flamedragon Realmverse to accept disciples on behalf of my master," Ning said.

"Accept disciples on behalf of your master?" Hegemon Brightshore was puzzled.

"Yes, on behalf of my master, Emperor Mirrorsnow," Ning said. "I need to accept ten! Although I'm technically accepting on his behalf, given that he is adventuring in the outside world I'll naturally have to teach them myself." He would be their senior apprentice-brother in name, but their teacher in truth.

"I might be taking on disciples on his behalf, but I still cannot be casual about this," Ning said. "I'm planning to divide the Flamedragon Realmverse into nine 'regions', and will pick out ten World-level cultivators from each region. I'll then select ten disciples from those ninety World-level cultivators. If I meet a few I'm truly interested in, I might even accept them as my own personal disciple."

Only after this concluded would he go out adventuring. He would be fully prepared for the Daomerge by then, and so he would also have to select a few more heirs in the event of his failure.

The Three Realms was simply too small of a place. Although he was leaving his Omega Sword Dao behind in the Three Realms, he had yet to find anyone he felt truly worthy of passing his technique down to.

“You accepting a disciple would be a momentous occasion.” Hegemon Brightshore grew a bit excited.

“Haha, a Daolord who has the power of a Hegemon... this is truly unprecedented. Your Dao has to be far stronger than ours! Perhaps I’ll send a few geniuses from the Brightshore Kingdom to take part as well.”

“That’s fine.” Ning nodded. “Everyone in the Flamedragon Realmverse is invited, save for the Aeonians.”

Ning didn’t feel any enmity towards the Dark Kingdom. In truth, it consisted of cultivators who had escaped a destroyed realmverse. There was no need to truly treat them as enemies. As Ning had grown more powerful, his view of the universe had changed as well. The only ones he continued to harbor enmity towards were the Aeonians.

Aeonians treated cultivators as food. Ning felt a tremendous amount of distaste towards them.

However, since he knew that Autarch Bolin had been the one to create the Aeonians, Ning elected to simply ignore them. There was no way he would go accept one of them as his disciple.

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Ning also told Hegemon Windrain, Hegemon Netherlily, and the Dao Alliance about his plans to accept disciples on behalf of his master! He informed them that he would be accepting ten disciples and could possibly even choose a few personal disciples. However, all candidates had to be skilled in the sword and be at the World level of cultivation!

The entire Flamedragon Realmverse was thrown into a state of chaos by this news. It must be understood that Ning would never casually transmit his Omega Sword Dao to others; to date, the only one he had shown it to was Daoist Bluestone. Everyone knew how incredibly powerful Ning was, and every organization hoped that one of their geniuses of the Dao of the Sword would have the chance to inherit Daolord Darknorth’s supreme technique.

And so, word of how the Flamedragon Realmverse was being divided into nine ‘regions’ quickly began to spread. Even many of the independent cultivators heard of this, and they all began to hasten towards the region closest to them.

The countless World-level cultivators all wished to become apprenticed to the most peerless Daolord to have ever existed, Daolord Darknorth.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 29: Sword Shack

Within a private room inside Vastheaven Palace. The white-robed Ji Ning was seated alone. Waving his hand, he caused ten stones to fly towards him and then hang there in the air before him.

Crackle, crackle, crackle. Ning waved his finger gently, causing flames to appear around the ten levitating stones and blaze away against them. The stones slowly began to melt, with runic patterns beginning to gradually appear on their surfaces. Everything was Ning willed it, and so the runic patterns joined

together into a complex runic formation that caused the ten stones to transform into ten black loops. Ning then picked out a few other precious materials and infused them into the loops.

Ning had reached incredible heights in both the Dao of Fire and the Dao of Formations. As a result, creating simple Eternal treasures like these was incredibly easy for him. As for the materials he used, they were valuable enough to drive many Eternal Emperors mad with greed... but to Ning, he had literal mountains of them.

“Success.” Ning smiled. All ten bracelets glimmered with golden, silver, and violet lines that emanated strange ripples of power.

“Top-grade Eternal treasures. Given the ingredients I put into them, only Hegemons should be able to destroy them.” Ning then took control over the ten loops, sending his godsense into one of them.

Whoosh. A space that was ten thousand kilometers in size appeared before him. These loops were all estate-type treasures! However, they were limited in size to ‘just’ ten thousand kilometers because they were exceptionally stable.

“Let the earth form.” A vast earth began to emerge from the bottom of the space, quickly covering up all ten thousand kilometers of the estate-treasure.

“Let the mountains arise!” Soon, a vast mountain range thundered up from the earth, stretching upwards for nearly ten thousand kilometers.

In accordance with Ning’s will, this ten thousand kilometer world became primarily filled with mountain ranges as well as a few rivers.

“The Sword Shack.” Ning’s godsense incarnation waved a finger, causing an ordinary looking thatched cottage to appear within the largest mountain valley.

Another hour went past. By now, Ning’s true body had created a prayer mat which he put within the Sword Shack. The most valuable item in this entire estate-treasure was this prayer mat, something which even many Eternal Emperors would pine for as they cultivated. Cultivators would find that their hearts and minds would grow very calm as they sat there, and they would be able to train and meditate much more quickly than normally. Ning had emulated the Autarch’s stone dais in his creation of this prayer mat.

Although he wasn’t even close to the Autarch’s level of insight, his prayer mats still had roughly 5% of the effectiveness of the Stone Censor of Reunion; thus, they could be considered rare and valuable treasures.

“This world shall be a world of the Dao of the Sword.” Ning’s godsense incarnation swept the world with his gaze. Rumble... every single part of this world, including the mountains and the deep crevices, all became filled with sword-arts. There were many of them, all of them varied and complex.

These were the various sword-arts which could be discovered once one researched and dissected Emperor Mirrorsnow’s [Heartseal] sword-art. By now, Ning had reached a higher level of insight into the Dao of the Sword than Emperor Mirrorsnow ever had. He had first dissected all of the many sword-arts which were the underpinnings of the [Heartseal] sword-art, and then used the [Heartseal] sword-art as the basis for formulating eight even more profound sword-arts that were focused in different areas.

Ning had now reached a high level of mastery over karma, giving him even greater powers of deduction reasoning. Given that he already had the Omega Sword Dao as his foundation, it was quite simple for him to formulate multiple Archon-class sword-arts.

If Ning merely wished to attempt the Daomerge via a single Supreme Dao, he would probably find the Daomerge to be much easier. However, his path was already set. Once it was set, there was no way to go back, no room for regret.

Besides... all things were relative. Ning's path was that of the Omega Sword Dao. He had seen and experienced many things, and had also created multiple Archon-class techniques for the Daos of Space, Formations, Space, Time, Karma, and more. This was why he was able to create so many Archon-class sword-arts with ease. If he had chosen to embark upon a simpler path, he would've been much more limited in his abilities and would never have reached his current heights.

"The Sword Shack is perfect for meditation, allowing one to train quite quickly." Ning nodded. "Within the world of the Sword Shack, those who wish to acquire rare and exceptional sword-arts must first pass a few tests."

"Alright. The Sword Shack will be more than enough to guide them on their paths." Ning revealed a smile. Since he had chosen to accept disciples on behalf of his teacher, he naturally had to give these 'fellow disciples' some treasures.

It was guaranteed that he wouldn't have much time to personally teach them, which was why he had put all this effort into creating the Sword Shack. This was a treasure that was far more valuable than the godsense legacy which Emperor Mirrorsnow had provided him when Mirrorsnow had taken him on as a disciple. Ning had a higher level of insight into the Dao of the Sword, after all, which meant that he also had better ways of teaching. He truly did hope that these ten 'junior apprentice-brothers' or 'junior apprentice-sisters' would be able to surpass what he was able to offer them.

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It took Ning half a day to create these ten Sword Shack worlds, then another eighty-plus years creating five more Silver Sword Shacks. Thanks to his mastery of the Dao of Karma, Ning had the vague feeling that he would at most take on a maximum of nine disciples.

He had previously already taken on Bluecliff Xiaoyu, 'Green Bamboo' Yang Quding, and young master Skywind; three disciples in total! If he factored in the legacy he had left behind after becoming a Daolord of the Fourth Step, it was guaranteed that he would have a fourth disciple as well.

Ning had the feeling that he would at most take on five more disciples. This time, he would see if there was anyone who interested and intrigued him enough so that he would take them on as a personal disciple instead of an honorary disciple on behalf of his master. He wouldn't try to force things; it would all be left up to luck and fate. If he found someone interesting, he would accept them.

These five Silver Sword Shacks were meant for his personal disciples. Thus, Ning spent much more effort on them. They were quite similar to the other sword shacks, but Ning used even more precious ingredients on the prayer mats, and also put much more effort into the creation of the formations. Every single one of the prayer mats was almost 20% as effective as the Stone Censer of Reunion! More

importantly, the Silver Sword Shacks were not centered around Emperor Mirrorsnow's [Heartseal] sword-art; rather, they were centered around Ning's own [Omega Sword Dao].

But of course, he couldn't simply transmit his Dao to them. Rather, he used many different sword-techniques to serve as guides, and also left behind imprints of the sword-intent of the five stances of his Omega Sword Dao.

"I'll have given them all I can give. Even the ten ordinary Sword Shacks have been filled with all the foundations they need; with those foundations, they have enough to develop the Omega Sword Dao on their own if they have the talent." Ning nodded. He himself had slowly gained bits and pieces of insights which he had gradually used to make up for the deficiencies in his foundations, then finally been tempered into developing his Omega Sword Dao.

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After finishing the creation of his gifts, Ning waited for another nine million years before the grand event which spanned the entire Flamedragon Realmverse began! Everyone was filled with excitement.

"It's said that many powerful Daolords of the Fourth Step have come to watch the competitions. Even if we cannot end up being apprenticed to Daolord Darknorth, we might be able to become apprenticed to other powerful Daolords."

"There are even some legendary Eternal Emperors and other ancient figures who have come to watch. They might take the opportunity to accept a disciple as well."

"That's nothing! All three of the almighty Hegemons have come alongside Daolord Darknorth! To be apprenticed to one of the three Hegemons or Daolord Darknorth would be truly incredible."

This event was simply on far too vast of a scale. The six major organizations in the Flamedragon Realmverse were normally in a state of balance, and so it was impossible for anyone save Ning to cause the entire realmverse to be thrown into such a state of upheaval. This sort of tournament and selection process was far grander than the ones which the Brightshore Kingdom utilized! But of course, there were many major powers and Emperors who were watching intently, wanting to take advantage of Ning's event to perhaps choose a few genius disciples for themselves.

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The nine major regions were each governed by Archon-class major powers as well as their subordinate Emperors. There was an orderly process that had been implemented.

However, the number of independent cultivators who came was simply enormous. Thus, the first year was just the pre-selection competition, where all those who didn't reach a certain minimum level of power were washed out. Ning was naturally the one who set the 'minimum threshold', which was simply the 'supreme World God' level. This alone washed out 99% of the cultivators.

Next, he teleported the remaining elites into the Vastheaven Everworld, to a place Ning had personally created... the Stairway to Heaven! The next trial would be the process of ascending the Stairway to Heaven.

The Stairway to Heaven were unfathomably high. If you wished to advance farther along the Stairway to Heaven, you would have to go through one contest after another. One side had to be killed or surrender before the other side could advance.

The Emperors, Hegemons, and Ning all watched intently as the battles in the Stairway to Heaven proceeded.

“This kid isn’t bad. I want him.” One of the Eternal Emperors in the Dao Alliance laughed, then waved a finger gently as he caused a strand of Eternal power to reach out and envelope the World-level cultivator who had nearly died just now.

Ning and the three Hegemons sat upon the highest thrones, watching from afar. They didn’t move to interfere. Only Emperors were qualified to select disciples from those who were on the Stairway to Heaven... but even then, they could only choose those who had failed! Only Ning and the three Hegemons were permitted to choose successful competitors.

“Interesting.” Ning’s gaze pierced through the void, coming to a rest atop of two figures who were walking side-by-side through the titanic Stairway to Heaven.

“Darknorth, have you taken an interest in those two kids?” Hegemon Brightshore asked.

“I want to watch for a bit longer and see how they perform. I do quite like the two of them, though.” Ning revealed a smile, causing Hegemon Brightshore, Hegemon Netherlily, and Hegemon Windrain to all laugh. It must be remembered that there were several peerless geniuses on the Stairway to Heaven who had fused multiple Supreme Daos together. The two Ning were staring at had each mastered just a single Supreme Dao.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 30: Fifth Disciple, Sixth Disciple

A young man and woman were standing side-by-side upon the Stairway to Heaven. The stairways were incredibly vast and covered with vague sword-scars. Ji Ning had left them here in order to benefit the World-level cultivators who were selected to take part in the tournament. As for how much benefit they would gain from it, that would be up to their own comprehension abilities.

“Absolutely incredible.” The youth and the maiden were staring upwards at the sword-scars above the stairs.

“Boundless, even the sword-scars which Daolord Darknorth left behind in a casual manner are filled with unfathomable profundity. Even if we don’t manage to become apprenticed to him or the other major powers, just having viewed them here at the Stairway to Heaven means it was all worth it,” the white-robed maiden said.

The youth nodded. Both of them knew their own limits. Although they were excellent figures in the world at large, here at the Stairway to Heaven they were ranked close to the bottom. However, as they ascended the Stairway to Heaven and viewed more and more of the sword-scars they were beginning to skyrocket in power.

As the controller of the Stairway to Heaven, Ning made sure that they weren’t given ridiculously powerful opponents. Only the weakest would be washed out, while the strongest would be able to walk

farther and farther. Ning wanted to make sure that the strongest wouldn't run into each other and then be washed out early.

Time passed on, one year after another. The World-level cultivators all moved quite slowly up the Stairway to Heaven, as all of them wished to meditate on the mysteries hidden within the sword-scars. Each battle meant that they might lose and be forced to leave, and so they were all quite slow and cautious.

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Ten thousand years had passed since their arrival at the Stairway to Heaven.

"Boundless, you've now mastered two Supreme Daos? You were faster than me!" the maiden said jubilantly.

"Muse, you were one step ahead of me in mastering the first Supreme Dao." The youth smiled as he looked at the maiden. Everyone could easily tell how deeply they loved each other.

The two had arisen together step-by-step from the mortal world. The maiden had once been young master Boundless' maidservant, and she had been given the name of 'Muse'. Muse had been born with an incredible soul-physique and had been selected and taken away by an Immortal to a so-called 'Immortal Realm'. As for young master Boundless, he continued to struggle his way through the mortal world, eventually clambering into the path of Immortal cultivation as well.

After countless battles and tempering experiences, he managed to dazzle everyone as he ascended into the Immortal realm, where he finally met his former maidservant 'Muse' once more. The two even had a child together! Eventually, the two ascended to the World-level almost simultaneously, and to this very day they were the only World-level cultivators their homeland had ever produced.

Muse was a Chaos Immortal, while young master Boundless was a dual refiner; both a Ki Refiner and a Fiendgod Body Refiner. As a result, both had Primaltwins which they had left behind in their homelands.

They were a pair of divine lovers, and together they departed from their homeland to wander the Chaosverse, encountering quite a few fortuitous events in the process. The story of how the legendary Daolord Darknorth was going to accept disciples on behalf of his master was an earth-shattering piece of news, resulting in them deciding to take part as well.

"I admit defeat!" Muse's sword-formation had been overcome by her opponent. She knew that she no longer had any chance, and so she immediately and voluntarily admitted defeat.

After the battle. "Boundless, I lost. Be careful as you proceed up the Stairway. If you are unable to win, just admit defeat." Muse could sense how the Stairway to Heaven was becoming increasingly difficult, and so she wanted to admonish her Dao-companion.

"I know." Boundless nodded.

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Half a month later, Boundless and Muse reunited at the base of the Stairway. "He was just too powerful. Not only was he an Ancient cultivator, he had even reached a higher level of comprehension than I did. I was thoroughly convinced by my defeat." Boundless shook his head, then said helplessly, "I thought that

the two of us could be considered quite talented and would attract some attention from one of the major powers watching, or perhaps a Daolord of the Fourth Step... but who would've thought that not a single one would reach out to us?"

"I waited for half a month at the base of the Stairway without anyone coming to meet me either." Muse nodded.

Both were proud and talented figures, the only World-level cultivators their homeland had ever produced. They had benefited greatly from this experience, but in the end no major powers had come to take them on as disciples.

"Let's wait for a while longer. Perhaps there will be a Daolord who takes interest in us," Boundless said.

"Alright, let's wait." Muse held onto hope as well. Having a good master could make all the difference in the world. Neither Boundless nor Muse had received any guidance from a Daolord, and thus they knew almost nothing at all about the Endless Territories as a whole.

"Hey there, kids." A voice suddenly rang out. Boundless and Muse both turned to look, rather excited and eager. Had a major power just chosen them? Who was it? Was it a Daolord of the Fourth Step, or perhaps even an Eternal Emperor? Or could it be a Hegemon... or perhaps even Daolord Darknorth? Although they knew rationally that it was unlikely someone particularly powerful had chosen them, they still clung onto their hopes and dreams.

They saw a white-robed youth walking towards them from afar. His aura was quite unique, and he didn't give them any sense of pressure at all. He seemed quite... ordinary.

"A Daolord?" Both Boundless and Muse felt rather disappointed. It was still fairly easy to distinguish a Daolord's aura from an Eternal Emperor's aura. Every single Eternal Emperor emanated an aura that had the scent of 'eternity' about it, an aura that whispered that time had no hold over this person.

Moments later, they quickly regained their usual calm. They were still quite pleased, to tell the truth; perhaps the Daolords who chose disciples here were the weakest masters available, but at least the two of them had been chosen! If no one had chosen them at all, they really would've felt saddened.

"You two have superb comprehension of the sword," Ning congratulated with a smile. Indeed, they were quite impressive.

As far as growth went, Boundless and Muse could actually be ranked in the top ten amongst the World-level cultivators who had come here and learned from the sword-scars. It must be remembered that he knew that the other powers would also be interested in taking on disciples, which was why he had merely required all of the World-level cultivators be 'skilled in the sword', rather than exclusively focus on the Dao of the Sword. Thus, there were (for example) some incredibly talented figures who were skilled in swordplay, but whose true forte lay in the Dao of Spacetime, in the Dao of the Saber, or even heartforce!

Of those who focused on the Dao of the Sword, Muse and Boundless had grown and improved faster than everyone else. Ning was able to tell at a glance that the two hadn't received the proper tutelage, which was why they had improved at such a rapid pace. When Ning saw them, he felt like he saw the mirror images of himself when he had first left the Three Realms.

It was only after Ning had joined the Twelve Palaces of Brightshore that he developed a Supreme Dao, and it wasn't until he had entered the alternate universe that he had mastered fused Supreme Daos.

In addition, Boundless and Muse were so close to each other that Ning couldn't help but think back to the feelings he and Yu Wei had shared for each other. "What a pity," Ning sighed to himself. If she was still alive, perhaps the two of them could adventure the Chaosverse together, just like Boundless and Muse.

"Are the two of you willing to enter my tutelage?" Ning asked.

"Senior, are you skilled in the Dao of the Sword?" Muse asked.

Ning nodded. As he did so, he caused a terrifyingly powerful aura of sword-intent to emanate from his body, an aura so strong that both Boundless and Muse felt their hearts quiver. However, they didn't truly understand what this aura entailed. They were merely a pair of inexperienced World-level cultivators, after all; in their eyes, all Daolords of the Fourth Step were terrifyingly powerful. They only felt that Ning was terrifyingly strong, capable of wiping them out with just a fraction of his might.

Boundless and Muse exchanged a glance, then immediately knelt down: "Your disciples greet you, Master."

"Mm." Ning nodded. "Follow me, then." An invisible dimensional ripple swept across the two of them. Ning took a single step forwards, shuttling through spacetime and arriving back at the place where the Hegemons and the Emperors were all gathered together.

"Daolord Darknorth."

"Darknorth."

"Congratulations, Daolord Darknorth, on having accepted some fine disciples." The Hegemons and Emperors were all laughing and congratulating Ning as they glanced at the two young fellows standing behind them. They couldn't help but secretly sigh at how incredibly lucky those two young fellows were! Instead of choosing more powerful cultivators, Ning had actually ended up choosing this pair of Dao-companions.

Ning returned to sit in the lotus position atop his cloud, with Hegemon Netherlily, Hegemon Windrain, and Hegemon Brightshore by his side. The four of them were seated the highest.

"B-but..." Boundless and Muse continued to stand behind Ning. They stared at the three awesome Hegemons next to them, then at the many Eternal Emperors below them. Every single person here emanated an aura of eternity. Even the most foolish of World-level cultivators would immediately understand that the many major powers standing subserviently before them were all Eternal Emperors... and so, Boundless and Muse instantly understood that they had just become apprenticed to the legendary Daolord Darknorth.

"W-we..." Boundless and Muse exchanged a glance. Both felt rather light-headed. The auras of the Hegemons and the many Eternal Emperors present were simply too oppressive.

"Master," Boundless whispered softly.

"From this day forth, you shall be the fifth and sixth disciples under my tutelage," Ning said.

Boundless and Muse instantly felt excited. Boundless asked, "Master, I heard you are taking on ten disciples in total?"

"No. Misinformation certainly spreads quickly." Ning shook his head.

"All of you young fellows have been spreading all sorts of wild rumors around." Hegemon Brightshore laughed merrily, "For this event, Darknorth is accepting disciples on behalf of his own teacher, which means those ten are technically just his junior apprentice brothers and sisters who he will teach in his teacher's stead. As for the two of you? You are Daolord Darknorth's personal disciples."

Boundless and Muse turned to stare at the white-robed, white-haired old man next to them. They felt a sense of closeness and warmth radiating from him.

"Darknorth, how many disciples do you plan on selecting?" Brightshore asked. "If you are done picking, I'm going to start."

"I'm done." Ning nodded. "I'll only choose these two from this event. I'll pick ten junior apprentice-brothers and sisters at the very end."

Although quite a few geniuses had taken part in this event, the only ones who had truly moved and intrigued Ning were Boundless and Muse. He felt as though he saw himself and Yu Wei in them, and so he had taken them on as his disciples! At Ning's level, taking on a disciple was more a matter of personal feelings than anything else. For example, his second example 'Green Bamboo' Yang Quding had been nothing more than an ordinary mortal.

Ning didn't keep his words private at all, allowing everyone to hear them. All the Emperors below him turned to stare towards Boundless and Muse with changed looks in their eyes. These two lucky kids! They don't even know how lucky they are. Their master was someone who no one in all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance would dare to offend, a peerless Daolord who caused even Hegemons to feel dread. He had set up this great tournament which covered the entire Flamedragon Realmverse... and in the end, the only two disciples he had chosen were the two of them.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 31: A Distant Journey

Finally, this great Flamedragon Realmverse event came to an end. The Hegemons and Emperors all departed one by one, with the Vastheaven Everworld regaining its usual calm.

Within Vastheaven Palace.

"Greetings to you, senior apprentice-brother Darknorth." Ten World-level cultivators were present. There were youths, elders, aliens, Aberrant special lifeforms, and even an Ancient cultivator. They all bowed respectfully, their gazes filled with unabashed excitement. They had finally been selected! It must be remembered that there were some geniuses who took part in this competition that were just as talented as them. A few were even more talented!

"From this day forth, you are now honorary disciples of Emperor Mirrorsnow," Ning said. "Our master, Emperor Mirrorsnow, has long ago departed from the Flamedragon Realmverse and gone off adventuring, which is why I shall teach you in his stead. However, in the end cultivation must come from the self. Thus, I will only provide each of you with ten sessions of individualized guidance. After the ten

sessions are over, I will not provide you with any further guidance until you become Daolords. Understood?"

"Understood." Although these World-level cultivators were all secretly surprised, they remained quite calm. They were all geniuses and all quite proud. They usually weren't all that impressed by most major powers, but they were filled with almost fanatical devotion towards Daolord Darknorth. This was why they had striven so hard to become apprenticed to him. It certainly wasn't because of 'Emperor Mirrorsnow'! Not even the chance to become Emperor Mirrorsnow's personal disciples, rather than just honorary disciples, was nearly as attractive as the chance to have Daolord Darknorth personally instruct them.

Ten sessions? They felt certain that there was a reason why Daolord Darknorth had said this!

"Good." Ning smiled upon seeing their reactions. "The ten of you are all extremely talented in the Dao of the Sword. Three of you have fused Supreme Daos together, while the other seven have all mastered multiple individual Supreme Daos. All I really need to do is provide you with some guidance. In the end, it will be up to you to walk the path between life and death as you become Samsara Daolords."

Disciples weren't necessarily capable of learning everything a teacher had to offer; in life, you had to make do with what materials you had to work with. Every single Samsara Daolord had to find his or her own Dao. Ning felt that it would be quite incredible if even a single one of his personal disciples or 'junior apprentice-brothers' and 'junior apprentice-sisters' ended up embarking on the path of an Omega Dao. The far more likely result would be that none of them would find that path.

The Omega Dao simply couldn't be taught. You had to go find it on your own! As a wise teacher, Ning knew that all he could do was guide them on their paths. Fortunately for them, Ning's own path was that of the Omega Sword Dao. His Dao was like a tall, sturdily-built house, and his guidance was the best guidance possible.

"This is the world of the Sword Shack." Ning waved his hand, causing ten black loops that glowed with runic lines to fly towards the ten.

"The Sword Shack is filled with countless sword-arts. Aside from the [Heartseal] sword-art of our master, Emperor Mirrorsnow, it also includes all foundations for the Dao of the Sword," Ning said. In other words... it contained the foundations for his own Omega Dao. This was why he dared to make the claim that it contained 'all foundations for the Dao of the Sword'.

"You can train in seclusion within the Sword Shack, but you must be tempered via adventuring through the outside world. Perhaps you will then be able to understand and find a path which truly belongs to you."

"Thank you, senior apprentice-brother." The ten disciples were all delighted.

"You are the only ones permitted inside the Sword Shack. If anyone else tries to bind it, the estate-world inside will be automatically destroyed," Ning said. "Thus, you must not give it to anyone else."

"Understood." Many of the ten mused that only a fool would give something like this to another!

Ning waved his hand again, causing a number of Dao-seals to fly out towards the ten as well. "These are Dao-seals which I personally forged. Some involve the Dao of the Sword, some involve the Dao of Space,

some involve the Dao of Time, some involve heartforce, some involve the Dao of Karma... each of you shall have nine seals total, and they come in varying levels of power. Some are meant for escape, some are meant to kill foes, and some are used to scout and explore. Just three of them can be used to attack foes head-on," Ning said. "When you go out adventuring, you must be careful and also conserve your Dao-seals. If you use them all up, I'm not going to just remake them for you."

These ten disciples were all overjoyed, but they also felt stunned. Daolord Darknorth had personally forged them? Forging Dao-seals was fairly easy, and many major powers were capable of it, but the cost was quite high as only valuable materials could be used to store such incredible levels of power. And... more importantly, the creator of the Dao-seal had to understand the Daos he was infusing into each seal.

In other words... if their senior apprentice-brother Darknorth created that many Dao-seals for them, he must have reached inconceivable heights in the Dao of the Sword, the Dao of Space, the Dao of Time, the Dao of Karma, and multiple other Daos!

"Here are a hundred million cubes of chaos nectar for each of you." Ning waved his hand, causing a few more storage-type treasures to fly out.

"Here are some top-grade Eternal swords which have been made in accordance with your own specific insights into the Dao of the Sword. Each of you can have six." Ning waved his hand again, causing a total of sixty swords to fly out towards the ten.

Top-grade Eternal treasures? Ning had a literal mountain of these things. In truth, every single Hegemon had piles and piles of top-grade Eternal treasures. Ning was far wealthier than most Hegemons. Not only had he blackmailed multiple Hegemons and killed Hegemon Winterflame, he had also accumulated a terrifying amount of treasure when he had swept through the Jadenfire Realm. He had a total of six Universe treasures! Alas, none of them were swords.

"I've already given you everything I can and should. Sword-arts, divine abilities, secret arts... you'll find them all within the Sword Shack," Ning said. "If you want to earn them, go into the Sword Shack and fight for them. Go now. I've already set up estates for you within Vastheaven Palace. Calm your minds and train hard. You can come find me if you have any questions... but remember, each of you will only have ten opportunities!"

"Understood." The ten fellow disciples all departed excitedly.

"What an absolute fortune."

"Each of us was given a hundred million cubes!"

"Perhaps ordinary Daolords of the Fourth Step might feel pain at giving away a billion cubes of chaos nectar, but senior apprentice-brother treats with Hegemons as equals. He's able to toss out such sums without batting an eye."

"Ah! The Sword Shack has a prayer mat inside. When my Primaltwin sat down upon it, its cultivation speed increased dramatically. This thing is far more valuable than the cubes of chaos nectar!" While journeying towards their estates, these ten 'fellow disciples' began to discover how marvelous the

prayer mat was. All of them were stunned by it. There were many Eternal Emperors who would be envious of such a treasure!

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Most of the treasures which Ning had prepared for his fifth disciple Boundless and his sixth disciple Muse were on par with what the other ten had been given. The only difference lay in the Sword Shack.

“Before you become Samsara Daolords, the two of you shall also have ten chances to come ask me for instruction,” Ning said. “Therefore, you should train hard within the Sword Shack. Do your best to resolve your questions on your own. If you find that you can make no progress at all, come find me.”

“Understood.” Boundless and Muse were incredibly respectful.

“You can go now,” Ning instructed, and the two immediately departed obediently.

Upon seeing everyone finally leave, the nearby Hegemon Azurefiend finally spoke up: “Darknorth, don’t you think you are just a bit too casual when it comes to teaching your students?”

“I can guide them, but providing them with overly detailed tutelage will actually constrain their growth,” Ning said. “It’ll be far more helpful for them if they can find answers to their questions on their own, rather than come to me for everything. Besides... the ‘Sword Shack’ I created for them can be viewed as half a teacher as well.”

“You might be overestimating your disciples a bit. Most of them have merely devised multiple Supreme Daos and have yet to even fuse them together. Not everyone is as freakishly talented as you, you know.” Azurefiend shook his head.

“Well... if they just can’t progress, then they can live in mediocrity.” Ning smiled. By its very nature, the Dao of the Sword required one to advance without looking back and to act in accordance with one’s own nature. How could one possibly become a major power if someone was always yammering at him about what he should do? Even though he was their teacher, he couldn’t interfere too much in their choices.

Besides... the more famous a teacher was, the greater his influence would be on his students. He had to be careful, and he couldn’t provide them with excessive guidance. If he did, he might end up causing his students to depart from the path which actually suited them the most. The path which was best for Ning wasn’t necessarily the path which was best for his students.

However... just letting them roam freely wasn’t an option either. This was why Ning had chosen to create the Sword Shack, which he had infused with the foundations of virtually all paths one could take in the Dao of the Sword. He would let his disciples choose the path which suited them the most.

Although it looked as though Ning was acting in a casual fashion, in reality he had put a lot of effort and consideration into how he was going to teach the disciples he had chosen. This was true for both his personal disciples and the disciples he had chosen on behalf of Emperor Mirrorsnow. Yes, he was technically just their ‘senior apprentice-brother’, but in reality he was like their master. This was why Ning had worked so hard to create all those different types of Dao-seals for them, which would be enough to allow them to deal with all sorts of strange predicaments. They were more than enough for the types of adventures which World-level cultivators would get into.

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After having accepted all these disciples, Ning led Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw in departing from the Flamedragon Realmverse once more. This time, they were going to go on a very distant journey to a place outside the demesnes of the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance.

As for his disciples? Ning's avatar would be permanently stationed at Vastheaven Palace and would keep on eye on everything which happened in Flamedragon Realmverse. Thus, it could also teach and guide the disciples.

Whoosh. The realmship continued its advance through the endless Great Dark. Inside the realmship, Azurefiend and Flamewing were gorging on a veritable sea of food, while Whitethaw quietly stood guard over Ning. Ning, in turn, was pondering while holding onto a jade slip.

Realmslord Windgrace had given him this slip, and it included all the information he had acquired regarding the dangerous place he was about to visit.

"The Icewind Sea?" Ning mused silently. The Icewind Sea was a place which Realmslord Windgrace and his peers had scouted out in the place, and they were the ones who had chosen this name.

The Icewing Sea could be described in one word – cold! However, it was a place which gave birth to quite a few fire-aligned treasures, with the Daomerge Firecloud Flower being one of them. This was also the treasure which Ning valued the most highly.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 32: Icewind Sea

"Realmslord Windgrace and his peers have ventured inside the Icewind Sea in the past, and they encountered a Sourcewalker who was at the Otherverse Lord level of power when they were there." Ji Ning nodded. "Within the realms of what we can handle. Although he's beyond myself and Azurefiend, so long as we have Flamewing with us we can deal with him with ease. However, this Sourcewalker has lived within the Icewind Sea and is able to make use of its local environs. It'll be quite difficult to deal with."

"We have to be careful. If we let it catch us offguard and ambush us, both I and Azurefiend will both be at risk of dying," Ning mused.

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The realmship warped through spacetime for over half a million years before finally reaching the distant 'Icewind Sea'.

"How beautiful." Ning, Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing stood within the realmship, staring in amazement at the beautiful scenes outside.

The endless Great Dark should be filled with nothing but darkness. It was an empty, lonely place without even a hint of light... but now, an enormous silvery-white vortex-world had appeared before them. A fierce, icy gale was howling throughout the region, forming an icy maelstrom of absolutely inconceivable size around it. Although Ning's group was able to see it with the naked eye, they were actually still extremely far away from it. This vortex had to be comparable in size to an entire territory!

“The Icewind Sea,” Ning murmured softly.

“What an enormous sea of cold energy. I feel as though endless amounts of freezing energy have gathered around this area,” Azurefiend said with an amazed sigh. “Although I’ve visited many realmverses and seen quite a few dangerous places, this truly is my first time seeing such an enormous conglomeration of cold energy.”

Ning concurred, “Normal realmverses are filled with lightning, wind, light, darkness, and all types of other energy. That’s why life is able to flourish and take root! In addition, the various streams of energy will be fairly docile and not too agitated... but the cold energy here has spread out to cover an entire territory in size! We could take all of the cold energy out of the Flamedragon Realmverse and put it here, and it still wouldn’t be as dense as this.”

“Weaker Eternal Emperors would probably be frozen to death,” Azurefiend said with a laugh. “That’s why this place, filled with such freezing might, is capable of giving birth to so many inconceivable treasures. Realmverses are quite plain and ordinary by comparison, which means they are unable to give birth to truly remarkable treasures.”

“I don’t like this place,” the nearby Flamewing muttered.

“We’ll leave right after I harvest the Daomerge Firecloud Flower,” Ning consoled.

Whoosh. The realmship began to engage in short-distance warps. It soon arrived at the borders to the Icewind Sea.

Slash. Slash. Slash. The furious wind howled against the realmship, striking against it as though it was formed from icy knives. The realmship was in peak condition and thus was able to endure the attacks with ease, but its flight path became slightly twisted.

“This wind is far too powerful,” Azurefiend muttered.

“We learned long ago from this jade slip that we must pass through this tempest layer if we wish to reach the continent inside the Icewind Sea,” Ning said.

The Icewind Sea was called a ‘sea’ but it wasn’t an actual sea. It was actually an absolutely enormous iceberg which naturally attracted all of the surrounding cold energy of the Chaosverse in an extremely large area. This was why such a terrifying vortex had appeared around it. This terrifying vortex was capable of killing even weaker Eternal Emperors. This sort of extreme environment was highly inhospitable for ordinary lifeforms to enter or live in.

Only Hegemons and Otherverse Lords and other major powers on or above their level would dare to enter a place like this.

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There was no way to teleport through spacetime within the tempest layer. The only option was to slowly fly through it.

Under Ning’s control, the realmship slowly stabilized as it followed the wind inwards. Given Ning’s mastery over the Dao of Wind and the Dao of Lightning, the realmship was able to maintain its

incredible speeds as it pressed onwards. Alas, the tempest layer was simply so vast that flying through it would take time.

They flew at top speed for over ninety thousand years.

“Look! There’s a planet up ahead,” Azurefiend called out.

“A planet?” Flamewing turned to look, then smirked. “That’s not a planet, that’s just a hunk of ice.” Indeed, it was a piece of ice that was billions of kilometers in diameter which was flying through the tempest layer at high speeds.

“Let’s move over and take a look. According to Realmslord Windgrace’s records, these planet-sized hunks of ice all broke free from the main Windsea ‘continent’ and often have marvelous treasures hidden within them.” Ning smiled. “If we’re lucky, we might even find a Daomerge Firecloud Fruit.” Ning and the others were quite patient; even if they spent a few dozen chaos cycles hunting for the Daomerge Firecloud Fruit, it would be fine.

Rumble... as the realmship drew closer, a wave of chaotic force suddenly swept across the realmship, causing it to tremble. It took Ning nearly an hour before they were finally able to successfully land on the ice ‘planet’.

This ice planet had its own gravitational field which repelled the tempest outside of it. As a result, things were quite calm on the surface of the planet.

“Whew. We finally made it out.” Azurefiend flew out, rather excited. Ning put away the realmship and then descended as well. This was a world of nothing but ice; even the ‘ground’ was solid ice!

“The ice...?” Ning made a casual grabbing motion towards the ground, causing a claw-shadow to sweep out against the icy ground. He wanted to forcibly tear out a chunk of it, but the only result was a clacking sound as a few scratches appeared on the ice.

“It’s that tough?” Ning was rather amazed. It looked as though he would have to put some real effort into it. He waved a finger, causing a streak of sword-light to fly out and carve a large hole in the ground, digging out a large chunk of ice. The ice then flew straight towards Ning, who reached out to touch it. He could sense the terrifying cold within the ice.

Ning couldn’t help but feel speechless. This was far colder than some of the famous types of mystic ice which existed in the Flamedragon Realmverse, and it was far tougher as well. His claw-strike had failed to pull anything out of it. In the end, he had been forced to exert 50% of his full power to carve this piece out.

Azurefiend’s voice suddenly rang out from off in the distance: “What the hell type of ice is this? It’s incredibly tough! I’m a freaking Hegemon, but I wasn’t able to break it apart by stomping on it!”

“This ice is everywhere. Don’t worry about it for now. Hurry up and search this place. Let’s see if we can find any treasures,” Ning said.

“Yes, Master,” Whitethaw said.

“I’ll go search as well.” Flamewing returned to his usual form, excitedly spreading his wings and then flying into the air. It had been quite some time since he had flown about in such a manner.

As for Ning, he began to search this place using his powers over spacetime. Godsense was of no use; every part of the Icewind Sea was filled with such an overwhelming aura of limitless cold that even godsense was suppressed, making it impossible for him to search too far with it.

“Eh?” Ning scanned the area, his gaze seeing past space and time as he scoured the place. “That’s a lot of treasure.” Ning quickly found certain treasures which lay within some fairly well-hidden places.

He saw a completely crystalline-looking tree of ice, a warm jewel, a fiery-red clump of grass, and more. Ning was able to name some of them, but most were completely foreign to him. All of them were clearly quite valuable. However, Ning was so incredibly wealthy by now that he didn’t really care about these treasures. Most likely, all of the treasures he had discovered would be at most compared to the networth of an ordinary Eternal Emperor. Still... this was a testament to what an incredible place the Icewind Sea was and how many treasures it held!

However, this was a place so dangerous that even someone like Realmlord Windgrace would only enter after calling a few friends to help out.

“Master! Master!” Flamewing let out an excited cry, his voice forcibly tearing through the suppressive effect of the terrifying aura of cold. Ning was able to hear him clearly from afar.

“Flamewing, what happened?!” Ning immediately moved, transforming into a streak of light as he flew straight towards Flamewing. Flamewing was standing within an icy gorge.

“Master, take a look! Do you see that?” Flamewing was rather excited, and he flapped his wing a few times as he pointed towards the front.

Ning hurriedly looked, only to see a series of long slender green leaves that were each three meters long. They were all growing slanted alongside the distant, icy-jade walls of the gorge. There had to be hundreds of those leaves, and there was a fruit at the very center of them. This fruit was completely azure in color, and it emanated a particularly pungent smell.

“Incense Spirit-Fruit?” Ning was rather amazed. This fruit was the second-ranked Daomerge treasure, but it clearly wasn’t ripe yet. Fully ripened Incense Spirit-Fruit was flecked with red and would emanate an absolutely alluring aroma which would cause even Hegemons to drool. For many major powers, Incense Spirit-Fruit was primarily considered a delicacy to be eaten. How many Daolords could possibly procure such a treasure, after all?

“So the Icewind Sea has Incense Spirit-Fruit within it?” Ning was very surprised. When Realmlord Windgrace had come here, he hadn’t found any Incense Spirit-Fruit. However, the Icewind Sea was a very large place; there had to be many places here which the Realmlord had yet to visit.

“Haha.” Hegemon Azurefiend flew over as well. He stared at the Incense Spirit-Fruit, then laughed, “Darknorth, your luck isn’t bad. We’ve just entered the Icewind Sea and haven’t even landed on the main continent, and you’ve already discovered some Incense Spirit-Fruit on an iceberg planet floating at the very outskirts. Given your crazy luck, you will probably be able to find the Daomerge Cloudfire Flower after all.”

“Right.” Ning nodded. Judging from the information Realm Lord Windgrace had provided, Incense Spirit-Fruit would probably be of very limited use to him. However, it was still far more valuable than a Voidsea Jade Seal and still could be considered a valuable treasure.

The Desolate Era

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 33: Descending Upon the Continent

After an hour, Ji Ning and his team had finished fully scouting out this ice planet. They didn't find any Daomerge Icecloud Flowers, while they only found a single Incense Spirit-Fruit. They did find quite a number of other marvelous items.

“There was nothing?” The Flamewing God continued to fly about the skies like a streak of light, unwilling to admit defeat as he continued the search.

“Forget it, Flamewing. This ice planet was nothing more than a tiny fragment of the Icewind Sea continent. We should feel lucky that we even found a single Incense Spirit-Fruit,” Ning called out loudly.

Whoosh. Flamewing descended and transformed into human form. He stared at the floating azure fruit before them, then muttered, “It isn't even ripe yet. I wonder how long it would take for it to fully ripen.”

“Judging from the looks of it, it'll take roughly ten thousand chaos cycles to fully ripen,” Ning estimated with a smile. “But that's simple.” Ning stepped forward to set up a formation around the spirit-fruit, causing spacetime to accelerate. As time began to speed up around the spirit-fruit, it began to absorb increasingly greater amounts of energy from the surrounding area.

Ning couldn't just harvest it right away, as fruits like this could only develop in highly specific environments! Even if Ning moved it over to another part of the Icewind Sea, he still might not be able to ensure its survival.

“I'll accelerate time around it by a rate of 3000x. If I increase it any further, the rate of energy absorption will destroy the entire frozen gorge,” Ning said. Powerful cultivators were living beings, making it extremely difficult to accelerate time for them. The Incense Spirit-Fruit, however, was just a type of unique vegetable. Given Ning's mastery over the Dao of Time and the Dao of Formations, he would be able to easily accelerate time by even a rate of 10,000,000x. Slowing down time wasn't too hard either. His main worry was that if he accelerated time too fast, the environment wouldn't be able to provide the Incense Spirit-Fruit with enough energy.

“Thankfully, the Incense Spirit-Fruit will maintain its potency indefinitely after ripening.” Ning shook his head. “If it was like the Daomerge Firecloud Flower, which must be used within a thousand years after it ripens, it would be a pain to deal with.”

“The Daomerge Firecloud Flower has a far more powerful effect. Of course it also comes with more stringent requirements,” Azurefiend said.

Ning scanned the area one final time, then said: “Let's go. If we have enough time, we can come back after a few chaos cycles.” Ning and the others boarded the realmship, then departed from this ice planet and entered the tempest once more.

Because Ning had personally set up a formation on the planet, he was able to sense its location even as they flew farther and farther away from the ice planet.

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Whoooooosh. A wild wind howled ravenously through the void, causing even Ning and the others to have a limited field of vision. All of them were staring at the outside, but there was nothing but a haze blocking their sight.

Still, judging from how powerful the infinitely cold aura radiating from icy sea of energy was in each direction, they were able to sense the general direction of the main continent.

Time flowed on, one year at a time. The realmship continued to fly forwards at maximum speed, while Ning and his team remained within the warm interior, eating and drinking. Ning and Azurefiend often discussed the Dao with each other. Ning's advantage was that he was skilled in many Daos, while Azurefiend was a Hegemon. They occasionally gained insights from their discussions with each other.

They spent over 150,000,000 years slowly flying through the tempest. During this time, they only encountered one additional ice planet. Alas, this one didn't have any treasures which intrigued Ning at all, and the total value of the materials they found on it was perhaps at most comparable to an Archon's networth. Ning naturally didn't care at all.

"Here we are." Ning revealed a smile as he rose to his feet.

"We've made it already?" Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all looked towards the outside, only to see an utterly vast iceworld that was a bit hard to make out due to the storm. This was a world that was unfathomably vaster than the two planet-sized pieces of ice they had encountered previously.

"Starting from today, all of us must be careful. Especially you, Flamewing; don't cause any trouble!" Ning instructed. "The Icewind Sea is quite massive; so long as we remain cautious, we might be able to avoid detection by Sourcewalkers."

"What have we to fear?" Flamewing was unhappy. "Master, based on what Realmslord Windgrace told us, the Sourcewalkers of the Icewind Sea are at most comparable to Otherverse Lords in power. I can beat the crap out of any of them!"

"Obey my commands." Ning frowned. He was afraid of Flamewing causing trouble. Azurefiend was a Hegemon; he would definitely be extremely cautious in such a terrifying place as the Icewind Sea. The Protector Whitethaw went without saying; he would obey all orders unquestioningly. Flamewing, however... Ning might have tamed him, but he was still like a child. He might just go crazy and start causing chaos.

Flamewing lowered his head and started to mumble to himself.

"The Sourcewalkers might be a bit weaker than you, but they've lived in the Icewind Sea for an extremely long period of time and understand it much better than us. They might use the local environment against us. If Azurefiend and I aren't careful, they might end up ambushing and killing us before you can do anything," Ning explained.

"I'll make sure to protect you and keep you safe, Master," Flamewing said hurriedly.

“Also keep in mind that Realmslord Windgrace and the others only explored a small part of the Icewind Sea. There might be other unknown dangers here,” Ning said seriously. “That’s why you have to obey my orders.”

“Oh.” When Flamewing saw the serious look on Ning’s face, he nodded obediently. “I’ll do exactly what you tell me to do. If you tell me to fly, I definitely won’t walk on the ground. If you tell me to walk on the ground, I definitely won’t fly.”

Ning secretly let out a sigh of relief. Without Flamewing, he and Azurefiend would never dare to enter a place like the Icewind Sea. That’s why he had to make sure that Flamewing obeyed all of his orders; if they weren’t careful, they could very well die.

“Come, let’s keep going,” Ning said.

“The Icewind Sea!” Azurefiend was quite excited as well.

By now, the realmship had already landed upon the infinitely vast continent of ice. Ning and the other three flew out, then scanned their surroundings.

As far as they could see, the vast icy world around them seemed quiet and calm. However, a few vortexes rising into the skies could occasionally be seen. Given their ocular prowess, they were able to see to a distance of a trillion kilometers. Even there, they saw over ten thousand vortexes spiraling into the skies and merging into the tempest layer above.

“Scout the area out and find all treasures that are hidden here. Remember, stay close to each other and don’t run around,” Ning said. The four began to scout the place carefully by themselves...

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This vast continent of ice had gorges, canyons, mountains, and more. However, everything was completely made out of ice!

The ice continent was almost as large as an entire territory in size. As a result, it had its own systemized ‘laws’, to the point where it had its own prime essences! Much like how the (much-smaller) everworlds had their own laws and essences, this vast continent did as well. Although it was merely the size of the Badlands Territory or Vastheaven Territory, its total energy levels surpassed that of entire otherverses!

It had its own laws and its own prime essences. Once a cultivator took control over the prime essences of an otherverse, that cultivator would become known as an ‘Otherverse Lord’. However, there was no way for anyone to take control over the prime essences of the Icewind Sea. Not even the Sourcewalkers who had lived in here since time immemorial were capable of it! The Sourcewalkers had merely been blessed by the prime essences of the Chaosverse, who had been enraged by the manner in which the Sithe had invaded and looted so many sacred sites. As a result, the Sourcewalkers were able to borrow some of the power from the sacred sites, causing the Sithe to suffer great losses as a result.

“If a Sourcewalker was able to take control over the entire Icewind Sea, then even Flamewing would be of no use. It might be able to stay alive, but the rest of us would probably be wiped out instantaneously.” After wandering the Icefire Sea for just a single year, Azurefiend found enough treasures to rival an ordinary Hegemon’s network. This caused him to feel stunned as to how marvelous the Icewind Sea was.

“The Sithe were too proud and too ravenous, causing even the prime essences of the Chaosverse to feel enraged. That’s why the Sourcewalkers were granted power from these sacred places.” Ning smiled. “Ever since the Sithe were destroyed, there have been no further tales of Sourcewalkers being able to control such power.”

Suddenly, Ning’s Immortal energy flared out. Swish! It grabbed the other three, then brought them with Ning as he warped to the edges of a distant gorge.

Even ice planets had their own chaotic gravitational fields, preventing Ning and the others from warping through spacetime. The great ice continent, however, was extremely stable and had its own system of laws. The only places where things were chaotic were those vast vortexes which rose into the skies; there, warping through spacetime was impossible. Thus, Ning and the others engaged in fairly short warp teleports, ensuring that they were able to avoid those places. This process was still far faster than flying normally.

“Hm?” When the four arrived in the air above the canyon, they all peered downwards into it.

“I don’t see a Daomerge Firecloud Flower.” Azurefiend shook his head.

“I don’t sense any Fire-type energy at all,” Flamewing agreed.

This gorge was the place where Realmslord Windgrace and the others had discovered that Daomerge Firecloud Flower. Ning and the others had been making haste towards it, although of course they would’ve been pleased to find another flower midway.

One years... two years... three years. Ning and his team continued to advance through the Icewind Sea, searching for the flower Ning needed. They encountered and picked up a number of valuable fruits, but most were unripe. In addition, they were afraid to harvest too much, for fear of being discovered by the Sourcewalkers.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 34: Sourcewalkers

Another 129 years went by in the blink of an eye.

Whooooosh. A vortex could be seen rising into the skies in the distance, causing spacetime to be twisted and distorted. Ji Ning and the other three were in a cave close to the margins of the vortex, peering towards it.

Azurefiend murmured softly, “According to what Realmslord Windgrace said, the most precious materials are all located deep inside the vortexes, which connect to the very deepest underground tunnels. Darknorth, shall we go in and take a look?”

“No need. Our target is the Daomerge Firecloud Flower! There’s no need for us to enter the depths of those vortexes,” Ning said. “If we do go in, we would be easily discovered by the Sourcewalkers.”

“Alright.” Azurefiend didn’t argue, even though he really did want to go in and give it a try. They hadn’t picked up many treasures in the past few years, as they were afraid that scouring too much would result in them being discovered, but even so the few treasures Azurefiend had picked up were worth two or three times more than his previous networth. Thus, he wanted to go into the depths of the abyss and

search for even rarer treasures... but the only way he could do that was if he relied on Ning's Flamewing God.

"The other valley Reamlord Windgrace mentioned isn't too far away. We should be able to reach it in around thirty years," Ning said. "Let us continue."

Daomerge Firecloud Flowers were simply too rare. They had searched for many years but found nothing at all. They did find another Incense Spirit-Fruit, but unfortunately it was yet another unripened one.

Ning and the others had only walked for the time needed to boil a kettle of tea when suddenly... boom! A blurry black light suddenly appeared beneath their feet, oozing out of the icy ground and forming into curved lines that stretched out trillions of kilometers.

"Not good. That's a formation." Ning's face tightened. "An alarm formation."

"We've been discovered." Hegemon Azurefiend was shocked as well.

Rumble... an enormous earth-shaking boom rang out in the distance as the ground began to crack apart. A titanic mountain-sized ice humanoid emerged from the ground, using his two hands to tear through it as rose from the depths.

Ning's gaze narrowed. The ice here was so tough that if he didn't use his Darknorth swords, he'd need to use roughly 50% of his full power to break through it. Most likely, fairly powerful Archons would have to use 100% of their full power to just barely break through the ice. This person, however, had been able to instantly tear through the ground with his bare hands. This terrifying level of strength alone showed that this creature was vastly stronger than Hegemons. Most likely, he was at the Otherverse Lord level of power.

"That's the Sourcewalker," Ning sent mentally.

"Sourcewalker?" Azurefiend's face turned pale.

"He finally came!" Flamewing, on the other hand, was excited. It really hated the Icewind Sea, as every single part of this place was filled with uncomfortable icy energy. When it saw the Sourcewalker, it instantly grew excited.

The Sourcewalker before them was covered in a layer of extremely thick ice which served as a form of icy armor which glowed with azure light. His head was covered with a helmet that had two icicles protruding from it, and he had long azure hair which fell down to his waist. He had an great deal of facial hair, and his gloomy azure eyes were filled with rage and violence.

"More of you thieves, come to steal my treasures!" The Sourcewalker let out a furious bellow, his voice transforming into a wind of terrifying power which swept out in every direction. The endless might in his voice alone caused Ning and Azurefiend to quail. The difference in power was simply too great.

"We ran into a Sourcewalker before we even found a Daomerge Firecloud Flower. What terrible luck." Ning felt rather resigned. They hadn't even gone into any of the vortexes or deep underground, where the treasures were more abundant and more valuable. That was where the Sourcewalkers usually resided.

“Sourcewalker,” Ning called out loudly, “We’ve come here just for the sake of finding a Daomerge Firecloud Flower! Its not all that valuable, and we’re willing to use our own treasures to trade for one. We’ll leave immediately after acquiring the flower.”

Daomerge Firecloud Flowers were incredible treasures for Daolords, but they were fairly ordinary when compared to the other treasures of the Icewind Sea. There were treasures here which would drive even Hegemons and Otherverse Lords mad with excitement.

“A Daomerge Firecloud Flower?” The ice-armored Sourcewalker was 540,000 meters tall. It stared downwards at Ning’s group and said angrily, “You can forget about taking away so much as a piece of ice from my turf! All you cultivators are nothing more than damnable thieves. This is my territory!”

“We can trade for it with our treasures!” Ning said frantically.

“Treasures? What use do I have for your miserable treasures?” The Sourcewalker took a furious step forwards, then shot forwards through the air: “Just die instead!”

Ning felt speechless. This Sourcewalker was just as Realmlord Windgrace had described; a berserker!

Whoosh. The Sourcewalker wielded a long frozen halberd which gleamed with azure light, sweeping it towards Ning’s group with such power that Ning had no choice but to instruct Flamewing to defend. “Flamewing, go!”

“Haha... I was at the verge of losing my patience!” The chubby Flamewing instantly let out an excited cry as it reverted to its true form, transforming into the titanic Flamewing God. Its giant flaming wings spread out fully as its body became bathed in furious flames that were so powerful, even the frigid energy of the surrounding area was pushed away. Everything within ten billion kilometers began to grow blazingly hot.

Otherverses had their own prime essences, as did the Icewind Sea... and in a sense, the Flamewing God itself had its own prime essences! Its energy levels truly were virtually inexhaustible, and its body was virtually indestructible. Ever since it was born, it had wandered the Chaosverse and had devoured entire realmverses with ease. Truly, its power was inconceivable. Its only weakness was that its level of insight was extremely, extremely low. If it was just a bit more clever, it would be able to massacre even Otherverse Lords with ease.

Still, all things came in balance. There was no way even the prime essences of the Chaosverse could give birth to creatures as powerful as Chaos Primordials which also had the comprehension skills of Sourcewalkers. This was completely impossible.

“A Chaos Primordial?” The attacking Sourcewalker was rather stunned when it saw those vast wings unfurl and the flames spread out in every direction around the Flamewing God.

“Haha, I’ve never eaten a Sourcewalker before!” Flamewing howled through the skies, while Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw all immediately moved to hide within the realmship. They weren’t qualified to get involved in a battle of this magnitude.

“This is my first time meeting a Chaos Primordial as well. Let’s do this!” The Sourcewalker was just as eager to do battle, and he valiantly charged forwards with his halberd at the ready.

Swoosh! His halberd suddenly pierced forwards, howling through the skies with incredible speed... but Flamewing was even faster! The strike missed, just barely managing to scrape past Flamewing's claws but not injuring Flamewing in the slightest.

"Up you go!" The Sourcewalker suddenly changed his stance. Previously, he had been using the halberd to 'stab' at Flamewing; now, he suddenly lifted it upwards!

This was a strike that seemed to split even the heavens in twain. Not even Flamewing was able to avoid this strike... but of course, Flamewing wouldn't deign to do so.

Boom! Flamewing had already been flying through the air; this strike sent it stumbling a few hundred kilometers higher.

The Sourcewalker was shocked. When he had used this killer technique against the cultivator Otherverse Lords he had fought, they had all been knocked backwards and suffered heavy injuries. The Chaos Primordial had merely stumbled a bit?

"Grwaaaar!" Flamewing excitedly flapped its wings, instantly charging downwards while using its enormous and thick claws to strike at the Sourcewalker. The Sourcewalker hurriedly brandished his halberd, spinning it into a circle that defended against the approaching attack.

Flamewing completely ignored the profundity of his opponent's attack, just striking down with its claws in an absolutely savage blow. BOOM! An enormous collision rang out as the earth itself began to split apart. As for the Sourcewalker, half of its body had just been hammered into the ground from this collision.

"I ablated over 90% of its power, but it still suppressed me completely?" The Sourcewalker was rather speechless at this result. Moments later, the look within its eyes grew even more frenzied. "Again!"

Boom. Boom. Boom! The Sourcewalker was incredibly valiant. At first, it chose to meet all of Flamewing's attacks head on, but later on it began to choose to dodge instead in an effort to win through technique. In terms of comprehension, it was already at the Archon level of insight. Due to its innate gifts, this level of insight was already enough for it to unleash the Otherverse Lord level of power in battle! Supposedly, the legendary Sourcewalkers who could fight even the Exalts were actually just at the Hegemonic level of insight.

Then again, the Hegemonic level of insight was an incredibly high level. Realmslord Windgrace, the Lonely King, and the other major powers were all at this level of insight. The only thing above this level was Autarchy.

Every so often, the Sourcewalker was sent slamming into the nearby mountains, hammered into the ground, or smashed so hard that it created deep craters and gouges in the earth beneath it.

Clearly, after Flamewing became a bit more accustomed to the way in which the Sourcewalker fought, Flamewing became able to completely dominate it in battle. The Sourcewalker had even lost his helmet, and his azure hair fluttered about wildly. He continued to roar with fury, but it was clear that he was being crushed in this fight. However, the icy armor that covered his upper body remained completely unscathed. It was quite a marvelous item.

“Darknorth, the Sourcewalker can’t hold back Flamewing.” Azurefiend chuckled merrily as he watched from within the realmship. “The Sourcewalker will probably retreat soon. If this fight continues, it’ll be nothing but bad news for him.”

Ning smiled and nodded as well. He was still going to be able to find the Daomerge Firecloud Flower.

Boom! Boom! Boom! At first, the Sourcewalker had been filled with a towering desire to do battle, but after being dominated for so long it was beginning to feel rather miserable. It had been a long, long time since it had felt this miserable.

His body wasn’t nearly as tough as a Chaos Primordial’s, but it was still vastly better than the bodies of cultivators. Thus, when he encountered cultivators like Realmlord Windgrace, he was able to chase down the cultivators and beat them down as he pleased. It had been quite some time since it had suffered in a fight like this.

After being slammed into a mountain yet again, the Sourcewalker angrily raised his head. His long azure hair fluttered in the wind as he roared, “Big brother! Hurry up and come out, I’m getting killed here!” His roar was like thunder, and it shook the world around them.

“Big brother?” Within the realmship, Ning and Azurefiend’s eyes both bulged out. “He has a big brother?” Ning couldn’t help but feel rather dazed.

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 35: Clash

“I thought you enjoyed fighting and causing a ruckus. Why are you asking me for help this time?” An icy voice rang out, shaking the world around them as the icy ground off in the distance suddenly split apart. An enormous crevice appeared, followed by a similarly towering figure emerging from it. This figure was dressed in long black robes that had silver patterns embroidered on them. His black hair fell down to his waist. He looked fairly handsome, but his eyes were ice cold. It felt as though there was nothing capable of stirring or shaking his heart.

He slowly walked over, causing an invisible wave of pressure to push down upon Ji Ning and Azurefiend. Both turned pale.

“This black-robed Sourcewalker is far more powerful than the other one,” Ning mused.

“Gwaaaaar! Another one? I’ll eat this one, then I’ll eat you!”

The fire blazing around Flamewing’s towered ever-higher as the boundless sea of flames around him swept outwards. He flapped his wings, once more charging towards the increasingly-battered armored Sourcewalker.

“Big brother!” The armored Sourcewalker was terrified, hurriedly dodging while flying towards his big brother. The black-robed Sourcewalker took a single step forwards, moving to block in front of his little brother.

“Fuck off!” The black-robed Sourcewalker stretched out both hands simultaneously, causing a strange, gloomy black light to appear from his palms which seemed capable of devouring everything in the

world. As for Flamewing, he continued to charge forwards with brute force as he sent his giant fleshy claws towards the black light.

BOOM! The twin palms met the twin claw head-on. Both were extremely confident in their abilities.

The black-robed Sourcewalker's face tightened slightly as he hurriedly took a few steps back, each step causing the icy ground beneath him to crack and shatter. He had to retreat a total of eight steps before coming to a halt. As for Flamewing, it was also knocked flying backwards. It had to hurriedly flap its wings a few times before stabilizing itself in midair.

"What?! He's actually able to fight Flamewing head-on to a standstill?" Ning, watching from within the distant realmship, felt rather stunned. Although Flamewing seemed to have a slight advantage, the difference in power was clearly minimal.

"This Sourcewalker is as powerful as that?!" Azurefiend was shocked as well. "Chaos Primordials can effortlessly dominate even Otherverse Lords and Golden Emperors! It took three Sithe Exalts working together to catch the Flamewing God. For this Sourcewalker to be able to fight Flamewing to a standstill means that it is probably quite close in power to the Sithe Exalts."

"Be careful, Flamewing!" Ning immediately sent mentally. "Don't be overconfident."

"Wow!" Flamewing let out a strange cry in midair, the scales on its body standing up like the hair on a cat. An excited look was in its eyes as it howled, "You are pretty strong, Sourcewalker! The only foes I've ever met who are stronger than you were those Sithe Exalts. However... you still aren't a match for me!"

"I've long heard of how powerful Chaos Primordials are... but now, it seems, you aren't all that impressive." The black-robed Sourcewalker remained quite confident in his chances. He leapt forwards, once more charging towards Flamewing.

Swish! Swish! Swish! Both transformed into blurs as they fought against each other at high speeds. The black-robed Sourcewalker had clearly chosen to stop using the clumsy method of meeting Flamewing blow-for-blow, as that was simply too exhausting. Unlike the Chaos Primordial, he didn't have endless reservoirs of energy. However, he clearly was highly superior on a technical level, and so he chose to use his superior techniques to deal with Flamewing, using all sorts of defensive techniques to ablate and draw away Flamewing's power, causing Flamewing to begin to struggle a little bit.

"You still aren't a match for me!" Flamewing let out a loud bellow as it finally went crazy. SWISH! Its speed instantly skyrocketed to its absolute maximum.

"That's fast." The black-robed Sourcewalker's face tightened.

Riiiiip! Flamewing pounced towards its foe at terrifying speeds, its fierce claws tearing through the air. The black-robed Sourcewalker hurriedly moved to defend. Just as it was about to counter-attack, Flamewing suddenly flew away, then arced back from afar to once more assault him.

Swish! Swish! Swish! The skies became filled with countless streaks of flaming light. Flamewing was so incredibly fast that this was all that could be seen of him. There was no need for it to allow the black-robed Sourcewalker to fight back against it. It relied on its raw speed to launch repeated and unanswered attacks, causing even the black-robed Sourcewalker to feel quite frustrated. Flamewing was simply too fast!

Flamewing's speed vastly surpassed the speed of any Hegemon. Even Hegemon Thunderstar, who was extremely skilled in speed, was far from being a match for Flamewing; only when Hegemon Thunderstar was riding in his realmship was he able to just barely surpass Flamewing in speed. As for Ning, he was slower than Flamewing even in a realmship.

"It's too fast. Although I have a realmship, I still wouldn't be able to outpace it," the black-robed Sourcewalker mused. In the end, it had yet to reach Hegemony in terms of its insights. In contrast, Hegemon Thunderstar had become a Hegemon via the Dao of Thunder.

"Master! Master!" Flamewing sent mentally to Ning, "This Sourcewalker is a pain to deal with. I've yet to harm him at all, despite hitting him with everything I have. It doesn't look like he's using up too much energy. If this continues, he'll probably be able to continue holding on against me."

Although Flamewing had the initiative thanks to its speed, the black-robed Sourcewalker had reached such a high level of insight that he was still capable of protecting himself.

Ning instantly began to frown. What were they to do? Flamewing was extremely strong, having completely the first armored Sourcewalker and injuring him, causing his energy to deplete rapidly. As a result, the first Sourcewalker chose to flee after a brief bout! But this black-robed Sourcewalker... its only weakness lay in its speed. In all other aspects, it was Flamewing's equal; in fact, it actually had an advantage in close combat.

"You are pretty strong after all, Chaos Primordial. You'll make a good mount for me!" The black-robed Sourcewalker suddenly let out a laugh. "Arise!"

Boom!

Boom!

Boom!

Light began to shine all around them as power began to circulate through the area. Countless runic lines appeared in the icy earth around them as an enormous formation began to reveal itself. The entire area became blanketed in blurry light; clearly, this was a trapping formation.

"If I had to deal with you anywhere else, it'd probably be quite hard... but this is my turf. Admit defeat, Chaos Primordial." The black-robed Sourcewalker was extremely self-confident.

"Retreat, Flamewing," Ning sent mentally. Flamewing immediately flapped its wings and charged back towards Ning.

"Store the realmship into your estate-world, then obey my orders with regards to breaking this formation apart," Ning sent.

"Alright, Master." Flamewing was quite unhappy after having been trapped within the opponent's formation. It didn't really understand formations, given how low its level of insight was. All it could do was try to overwhelm the formation with raw power! Given that it was strong enough to dominate even Otherverse Lords, ordinary formations were no match for it. However, this was a formation that was controlled by a Sourcewalker that was every bit as strong as Flamewing; overpowering it probably wasn't an option.

Whoosh. Flamewing put away the realmship. Even though Ning was now within Flamewing's estate-treasure, his gaze was still able to see past the dimensional barriers and into the world outside. This was primarily because Flamewing was in control of the estate-treasure. It didn't move to oppose Ning, and so Ning was able to see what was happening outside.

"This trap formation is a bit interesting, but defeating it won't be hard. Flamewing, given how strong you are, this is actually going to be easy." Ning felt quite confident. "Obey my commands."

The Dao of Formations was an incredibly difficult one, but Ning had reached terrifying heights in it. In all the Sixteen Realmverses Alliance, there was probably no one superior to him in this regard! When he had first unlocked the secrets behind the Jafire Realm's formation-diagram, he had already reached the Archon level in the Dao of Formations. He had then spent another long period of time studying formations in order to unleash Flamewing, and as a result his insight into the Dao of Formations had deepened even further.

Swish! Flamewing transformed into an arced streak of light, flying through the blurry formation at high speed. It repeatedly changed directions, sometimes choosing to ram through certain points with raw force.

To break the entire formation through raw power was impossible for Flamewing, but Ning's level of mastery over the Dao of Formations was so high that he was able to find its weak spots with ease. To locate and then break through those weak spots was naturally quite simple.

Boom! Boom! Boom! A number of explosions could be heard in succession. The formation which the black-robed Sourcewalker had spent quite a bit of time setting up was instantly disrupted, and the surrounding area returned to its usual appearance. It was once again possible for everyone to clearly see the vast, icy world around them.

"Why did it break?! Big brother, your formation was so powerful than when I was trapped inside it, I had no idea how I was supposed to escape. How was it breached like that?!" The armored Sourcewalker was rather dazed.

"You idiot. All you know how to do is fight. You know nothing of formations." The black-robed Sourcewalker stared towards the fleeing Flamewing, his eyes shining. "It was actually able to disrupt my formation in the blink of an eye. There's no way that Chaos Primordial could've accomplished it on its own; those things are legendary for their stupidity. That means that it had to have been one of the two cultivators in that realmship. So one of them is actually a grandmaster in the art of formations!"

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After breaking through the formation, Flamewing instantly grew excited. It let out an earth-shattering roar, then said: "Hey, Sourcewalker! Wasn't your formation supposed to be really awesome? Why don't you activate a few more and let's see how they do?!"

Formations had to be set up in advance. The black-robed Sourcewalker had detected Ning's group early on and thus had set up this formation before revealing himself. How could he suddenly manifest another powerful formation out of thin air?

“Gentlemen.” The black-robed Sourcewalker had an excited look in his eyes, and he said with a smile: “Do you think you can escape simply because you breached my formation?”

“Without your formations, do you think you can stop me?” Flamewing howled back, “Be good and hand over the Daomerge Firecloud Flower. Otherwise, I’m going to loot the entire Icewind Sea completely clean.”

“This place is my territory. You should play nice and listen to what I have to say.” A strange, rhomboid-covered globe suddenly flew out from the black-robed Sourcewalker’s forehead and into the air. Boom! A strange power which belonged to the Dao of Space suddenly swept out and covered the entire area, moving at such incredible speeds that it completely covered a trillion kilometers in the blink of an eye.

The entire region covered by this power completely changed. It had transformed into a world of the starry skies, with Flamewing and the two Sourcewalkers both located within it.

“This is a weapon which I acquired from a Sithe who once attacked this place.” The black-robed Sourcewalker’s voice echoed throughout every part of the starry skies.

“Flamewing.” Ning immediately issued an order from within the estate-world: “War machines might be powerful, but activating them uses up an enormous amount of energy. Don’t worry about him. You have a virtually indestructible body and limitless energy; focus all of your efforts on tearing through this astral world. Rip it to pieces with your power!”

[The Desolate Era](#)

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 36: Easily Accomplished

“Yes, Master.” Ji Ning’s command was perfectly suited to the Flamewing God’s temperament. It immediately unleashed an earth-shaking howl as it flapped its wings, leaving behind a jagged scar in the air as it soared towards the limits of this astral world.

The black-robed Sourcewalker simply watched calmly: “The forceful response, eh?”

BOOM! The ‘membranes’ of this astral world rumbled as the charging Flamewing’s giant fleshy claws slammed into them, with the explosion filling the entire starry realm. However, this astral world remained quite stable; it didn’t even budge in the slightest. Instead, it was Flamewing who was knocked flying backwards by tens of thousands of kilometers.

“Sithe war machines truly are impressive,” Ning sent mentally. “This black-robed Sourcewalker may be far more powerful than most Hegemons, but there’s no way it can possess limitless power like you, Flamewing. Ignore all else and just launch repeated attacks. A hundred attacks, a thousand attacks, ten thousand attacks... I want to see how long the Sourcewalker can resist you!”

“Fine.” Flamewing’s confidence was soaring thanks to its master’s words, and it once more sent itself slamming into the edges of the realm.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Flamewing used all of its power to slam into the edges of the realm, moving in a fairly rhythmic manner. Seeing this, the black-robed Sourcewalker slowly shook his head.

Whoosh. The Sourcewalker willed it, and the strange energy that had covered this area of a trillion kilometers instantly dissipated, flying back into the globe in front of the Sourcewalker. The world around them once more reverted to the normal icy world.

“He gave up.” Ning felt a sense of delight.

“Don’t misunderstand. I’m not afraid of you.” The black-robed Sourcewalker’s voice boomed out, echoing through the skies: “The dimension formed by this Sithe war machine is incredibly stable and is not easily breached. I, Daoist Towerdawn, have wandered the Chaosverse for countless years and have many tricks up my sleeve. Even if I cannot kill you, it would be very easy for me to keep you trapped here! If you wish to leave this place, you must go through the tempest region. Even if no one is bothering you, it will take you a hundred million years to fly through it! If I chose to interfere, you might be able to stay alive but you’ll never be able to escape.”

Ning’s heart sank. Indeed, the only way out was to slowly fly out rather than warp through spacetime. The black-robed Sourcewalker was probably telling the truth. However, thanks to Flamewing’s power it wouldn’t be that easy for him to trap them either.

Whoosh. The realmship appeared next to the Flamewing, with Ning, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw inside of it. They didn’t dare to leave it, for fear of being ambushed.

“You talk a big game,” Azurefiend called out. “Why did you put away that Sithe weapon, then?”

“Haha...” Daoist Towerdawn actually let out a rare laugh. This caused the armored Sourcewalker to stare at him in astonishment. His big brother almost always had an icy look on his face, and he rarely laughed.

“You were able to defeat my formation with ease. I refuse to believe this Chaos Primordial learned the art of formations! That means one of you two has to be a formations expert.” Daoist Towerdawn’s gaze was cold and calm as he stared at Ning’s realmship. “That’s why I feel that there’s no need for us to fight.”

“All you want is a Daomerge Firecloud Flower, right? Those things are of no use to us at all. I want your help in breaching a formation. If my guess is correct, you need the flower for the white-robed Daolord inside the realmship, yes? So long as you help me breach that formation, I’ll gift the flower to you! Not just that; I’ll give you other Daomerge treasures as well, like the Spirit Incense-Fruit. I’ll give them all to you!”

“But big brother! The Spirit Incense-Fruit is delicious!” the armored Sourcewalker couldn’t help but interrupt. Daoist Towerdawn cast him a cold gaze, causing him to instantly shut his mouth and fall silent.

“Breach a formation?” Ning and Azurefiend were both intrigued as they considered this from within the realmship. If they could avoid a fight, they would prefer to do so. Clearly, this Sourcewalker wasn’t easy to deal with! Azurefiend sent mentally, “Darknorth, the Daomerge Firecloud Flower and the Spirit Incense-Fruit are only useful to Daolords; they aren’t all that valuable to Sourcewalkers or Eternal Emperors! He probably won’t try to cheat you.”

“This works for me. However, you must swear a lifeblood oath on this,” Ning said.

“Very well. However, I do want to let you know something; the entire Icewind Sea only holds a single Daomerge Firecloud Flower, and it is still growing. I estimate that it’ll take tens of thousands of chaos

cycles before it ripens! Even if you accelerate time, you'll only be able to accelerate it by a ratio of 1000x; otherwise, you'll impact its growth cycle. In other words, you'll have to wait a minimum of a few dozen chaos cycles before you can actually obtain it."

"That's fine." Ning had suspected this would be possible, as Daomerge Firecloud Flowers had to be used within a thousand years of ripening. Thus, any ones he encountered were likely to be unripe. These marvelous flowers needed extremely long periods of time to grow. A few dozen chaos cycles... this was a fairly long period of time, but he needed to make other preparations for his Daomerge as well. Once the flower bloomed, he would need to immediately begin the Daomerge.

"Very well. I need you to unlock the restrictive seals covering this shield." Daoist Towerdawn waved his hand, causing a bronze shield which was roughly nine meters long to immediately appear before him. This shield had the enormous face of a beast as its motif, and it emanated a mysterious yet dominating aura.

"This is something I came across by accident when I was wandering the borders of the Sithelands, but I've been unable to defeat the formations sealing it," Daoist Towerdawn said.

"The Sithelands?" Ning and Azurefiend were both surprised.

"Yes, the homeland of the entire Sithe race," Daoist Towerdawn said. "Don't ask any more questions; the only task before you is for you to unlock these seals."

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Ning and Daoist Towerdawn both swore lifeblood oaths. Only then did Ning exit his realmship.

Whoosh. Daoist Towerdawn rapidly shrank in size from 540,000 meters to a height equivalent to Ning's. He glanced at the armored Sourcewalker, who obediently shrank down as well.

Ning, Azurefiend, Whitethaw, and Flamewing all walked over as well.

"What cowards," the armored Sourcewalker mumbled.

"They are simply being cautious," Daoist Towerdawn said, then glanced at Ning and the other two. "If you can breach the restrictions covering this shield, it shall be as I swore. If not, you can forget about acquiring those treasures."

Ning walked straight over to the shield as he said, "Don't worry, if I can't break it we can just keep fighting if that is what you wish. There'll be plenty of time for that."

"Grr..." Flamewing let out a low growl towards the two Sourcewalkers.

"Hah! You really do have a Sithe treasure here." Ning nodded. "It is actually covered with seven layers of restrictive seals. This has to be an extremely important treasure."

"Early on, one of my friends guessed that since it is shaped like a shield, it is probably meant for defense," Daoist Towerdawn said. There were many types of Sithe war machines. Some were strong, some were weaker. The chains which Ning had acquired had suppressive effects and could absorb energy, while the one Daoist Towerdawn had just used was able to create a dimension of its own. Realmlord Windgrace's 'Blacksun' was capable of allowing instantaneous teleportation across great

distances and also had incredibly powerful attacks. The Realmslord's single war machine was so powerful that it could influence entire sectors, making it incredibly precious.

Ning nodded, then lowered his head to carefully inspect the shield. He smiled. "Interesting. The person who set down this formation can be considered an expert, I suppose."

The formations over the shield served to suppress and seal its power, making it quite similar to the chains which had imprisoned the Flamewing God. However, it was clearly much less complicated. The Flamewing God had been incredibly important to the Sithe; they had sent three Sithe Exalts to capture it, then had fashioned the chains which kept it imprisoned. There was no way this buckler was equivalent to a Chaos Primordial in value, and the person who created the seals over it hadn't been at the Sithe Exalt level.

The seals over the chains that had been around the Flamewing God? Now those had been complex! If it hadn't been for the fact that Ning had a detailed library of many Sithe formations, there was no way he would've been able to solve them.

He had been at a very high level of insight into the Dao of Formations, and also had many detailed guides. Despite that, he still had to spend hundreds of chaos cycles analyzing the chains before managing to succeed.

In comparison, the formations before him were far simpler. Ning had reached a high level of mastery over Sithe-style formations, and the formation before him was actually something which was written down within that library of Sithe techniques.

"No need to rush things. Let's take it slow. So long as you can finish before the Daomerge Firecloud Flower ripens, it'll be fine. You have dozens of chaos cycles," Daoist Towerdawn said.

"Dozens of chaos cycles? I'm gonna take a nap, big brother. Wake me when it's over." The armored Sourcewalker turned, preparing to go take a nap.

"No need for all that trouble." Ning simply reached out and gently tapped the surface of the buckler. Instantly, a unique type of Immortal energy flowed out from Ning's finger and began to silently break through the layers of formations covering the shield. In just the blink of an eye, all seven layers of formations were instantly breached. The azure shield immediately began to emanate with a terrifying aura that seemed to have the weight of mountains. Ning himself felt as though he could use all his power but still be completely unable to budge the shield at all.

"...big brother, didn't you say that the formations were really tough?" The armored Sourcewalker stared in shock.

Daoist Towerdawn was rather surprised as well. Moments later, an overjoyed smile appeared on his face, and he actually slapped Ning on the shoulders in a very friendly manner. This caused Ning to feel rather surprised himself.

Daoist Towerdawn said with a joyful laugh, "You aren't bad, you little Daolord tyke! I thought it was the skinny old man standing behind you who was the one skilled in formations. When I saw that it was you, I actually lost hope. I never would've imagined you'd break it almost instantly! You really are incredible. Feel free to take the Daomerge Firecloud Flower and the Incense Spirit-Fruit! Haha. Oh, right. I have a

few other Incense Spirit-Fruits here in my estate-treasure. I was planning to serve them to any friends who came calling, but I'll just give them to you instead."

The Desolate Era

Book 38: Daomerge Chapter 37: Fifty Chaos Cycles in the Icewind Sea

Daoist Towerdawn waved his hand as he spoke, causing a jade green box to open in front of him. Within the box was five fiery red fruits that emanated such succulent auras, Ji Ning couldn't help but begin to drool.

"Thank you." Ning gladly waved his hand and accepted them all. Although these fruits might be of limited use to him, they would be of tremendous use to the likes of his good friend Ninedust or his master Subhuti when the time came for their Daomerge.

"No need for thanks. This is just like candy to me; the only thing it is good for is the taste. It's only useful to you Daolords." Daoist Towerdawn's attitude towards Ning had clearly improved quite a bit. "Come, let me take you to the Daomerge Firecloud Flower."

Ning's eyes lit up. He immediately led Flamewing, Azurefiend, and Whitethaw to follow Daoist Towerdawn and the armored Sourcewalker in quickly delving deep underground.

The depths of the Icewind Sea were filled with frozen tunnels. Daoist Towerdawn quickly led Ning's group before a spacetime formation.

"This realm of mine has many tempests within it, causing spacetime to be unstable. Even I am unable to warp through spacetime," Daoist Towerdawn said. "That's why I spent quite a bit of effort in setting up all these formations to stabilize spacetime in certain areas. I was able to create a total of eight stable spacetime tunnels that allow me to travel to various parts of the Icewind Sea quite quickly."

"Prior to this, we were forced to slowly fly normally," Azurefiend said with a laugh.

"Haha, when cultivators see us they are usually terrified and will flee immediately," Daoist Towerdawn laughed. "Very few are unafraid of us. Come, let us enter the formation."

Whoosh. The formation stabilized spacetime, creating a stable spacetime tunnel that allowed Ning's group to be quickly transported to a different part of the Icewind Sea. Soon, Daoist Towerdawn led them to the location which held the Daomerge Firecloud Flower.

Deep within the earth, there was a freezing pool of water that glowed with azure light. At the very center of the pool was a flower that was slowly swaying. The flower had yet to bloom, but it was already tinged with a pink color. It had three leaves, and all of them were a fiery red color and seemed to be kissed by flames.

"That right there is the Daomerge Firecloud Flower." Daoist Towerdawn pointed as he spoke: "Once the Daomerge Firecloud Flower blooms, it'll be truly magnificent."

"So this Daomerge Firecloud Flower is located underground?" Ning was rather startled. "Daoist Towerdawn, is it really true that there are no other Daomerge Firecloud Flowers in the Icewind Sea?" The one which Realmslord Windgrace has spoken of was located in a valley. But of course, that was a

long, long time ago; that flower had long ago bloomed and been harvested. Still, Ning felt that there should be others above ground as well.

“Daomerge Firecloud Flowers are very unique, and only a place as unique as the Icewind Sea can give birth to them. More importantly, the Icewind Sea can only give birth to one at a time.” Daoist Towerdawn laughed. “Sometimes, it’ll bloom underground; other times, it’ll bloom on mountain peaks or halfway up a mountain. It can bloom anywhere in the Icewind Sea, but only one can ever exist at any point in time! This is my territory, and I know it quite well.”

“It’s true, there’s only one at any point in time,” the armored Sourcewalker agreed. “And it causes quite a disturbance when it blooms. There’s no way we’d miss the telltale signs of it. My big brother is often roaming the outside world, but I always reside here in the Icewind Sea. I’ve seen hundreds of Daomerge Firecloud Flowers bloom, and each time the process is the same.”

Ning nodded. Even if they had been able to sneak in undetected, they wouldn’t have been able to find the flower even after scouring the entire surface of the Icewind Sea. As for the underground area? The frozen underground tunnels were all incredibly winding and complex; it’d be even harder to find the flower down here, and their chances of being discovered would increase dramatically.

It seems that them being discovered early on and being forced into battle against Daolord Towerdawn was actually a good thing. It ensured they didn’t waste too much time, at least!

“It only has a bud and stem; it’ll be tens of thousands of chaos cycles before it blooms.” Daoist Towerdawn looked at Ning. “Will you set up a formation, or shall I do it for you?”

“Allow me.” Ning immediately stepped forward.

“Your formations are stronger than mine, and you are more detail-oriented as well.” Daoist Towerdawn smiled merrily as he watched from nearby. He normally always had an icy look on his face, but today he was in an exceptionally good mood. This Sithe weapon which had puzzled and frustrated him for countless aeons had finally been unsealed! He had already bound it in secret and now knew how it was used. With this weapon at his disposal, he was now significantly more powerful than he had been in the past, and his status amongst his friends and peers would probably rise a bit.

Ning carefully and attentively set up a temporal acceleration formation around the entire freezing pool. Although Daoist Towerdawn had stated that the maximum was 1000x temporal acceleration, Ning only gradually and carefully increased the temporal acceleration rate.

100x... 300x... 500x...

Ning was afraid that he might disturb the Daomerge Firecloud Flower’s growth patterns, but in the end Daoist Towerdawn was right; Ning was able to upgrade the temporal acceleration all the way to 1000x without any instability at all.

“Whew.” Ning let out a sigh of relief. The Daomerge Firecloud Flower was at hand. For now, he could think of nothing else he needed for his preparations. As far as external sources of support went, he had the Autarch’s stone dais, the Stonefire Pearl, and a Daomerge Firecloud Flower. It could be said that his preparations were perfect.

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Ning temporarily took up residence in the Icewind Sea. Daoist Towerdawn and his brother welcomed him warmly, and eventually Ning learned that the armored Sourcewalker's Daoist title was 'Fireflame'. The Sourcewalker had clearly chose to live in a place like the Icewind Sea, and yet chose 'Fireflame' as his title. Ning really didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Ning ended up spending more than fifty chaos cycles in the Icewind Sea! This was an extremely long period of time for Ning. His Primaltwin continued to remain within the Azureflower Estate, maintaining a 100x rate of temporal acceleration atop the Autarch's stone dais as he meditated on one technique after another, wasting not even a single moment of time. He spent a total of over 5000 accelerated chaos cycles in training.

In truth, given Ning's mastery over spacetime, formations, karma, and his Omega Sword Dao, it was quite easy for him to study other techniques. Even the most difficult of Daos, the Dao of Numerancy, Ning managed to learn after spending less than half the time he had needed for the Dao of Karma. This was because the Dao of Formations and the Dao of Karma both had many links to the Dao of Numerancy.

In truth, there were many Daos which overlapped with each other in important ways. For example, the Dao of Ice and the Dao of Water! 'Ice' was considered part of the Dao of Water, but the Dao of Ice was a purer extension of it which would allow one to walk farther along this path.

One Dao after another... Ning reached the Archon level in many of them, allowing him to gain many new insights as to how the vast Chaosverse functioned. However, as he suspected, he was unable to gain even a single new insight into his Omega Sword Dao.

There was no technique, no cultivation path, no insights which would be of use to him in his Omega Sword Dao.

"I am making no progress whatsoever. All I can do is throw everything into the Daomerge," Ning mused.

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The many years he spent in the Icewind Sea served to temper his heart, making his Daoheart even purer than before. All other thoughts had fled from him; his only thoughts were of the Daomerge.

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Ning, Daoist Towerdawn, the Flamewing God, and the others had all assembled deep underground next to the flaming pool.

"Almost. It's going to bloom at any moment." Daoist Towerdawn and Daoist Fireflame, the two Sourcewalkers, watched with looks of expectation in their eyes.

Ning stared intently at the flower in the middle of the pool. It was in the process of budding. Compared to before, the amount of marvelous energy gathering inside it had grown markedly more dense, almost as though it was about to explode at any moment.

Whoosh! Suddenly, without any preamble, the flower bloomed. Flaming energy swirled out around the surrounding area, forming a beautiful flaming flower.

Flaming clouds circled the area, ensconced by leaves. The flower had bloomed, releasing its beauty unto the world for all to see.

“The Firecloud Flower.” Ning murmured softly, “The Daomerge Firecloud Flower.”

“Hurry up and harvest it, Darknorth!” Daoist Towerdawn said.

Ning immediately stepped forwards and dispelled his formation, then sent his Immortal energy towards the flower. It easily covered the entire Firecloud Flower and then pulled it out by the roots. At the same time, Ning caused a jade box to manifest in front of him. The jade box opened, and Ning placed the flower into the box while setting up a temporal deceleration formation over it.

The flow of time continued to slow. Once it reached the rate of a millionth of the normal rate of time, Ning realized that the amount of energy it took to maintain the formation suddenly skyrocketed to the point where even he couldn’t endure it.

“Don’t try to force it,” Daoist Towerdawn said. “Once the Daomerge Firecloud Flower blooms, it has to be used within a thousand years. Otherwise, its marvelous energies will completely evaporate. You can cause time to slow down around it, but its energies will naturally try to resist. That’s why it’s impossible for you to completely freeze time around it.”

Ning nodded in understanding. It was impossible for anyone to completely stop the Daomerge Firecloud Flower’s energies from dissipating. If one could simply stop time around it, then it would be easy to harvest and then store Daomerge Firecloud Flowers for Daolords to use. However, at most one would be able to slow down time to a millionth the normal rate; in other words, at absolute most the flower could be preserved for roughly a billion years. No major power, no matter how mighty, would be able to accumulate a large supply of Daomerge Firecloud Flowers.”

“It’s enough. I’ll have enough time to bring it back to my homeland.” Ning smiled as he looked at Daoist Towerdawn. “Brother Towerdawn, I’ve bothered you quite a bit in recent days. It is time for us to leave.”

“The Daomerge is the greatest obstacle you cultivators must face. You must be careful. If you succeed, we’ll be able to meet again in the future,” Daoist Towerdawn said.